DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 142 532 SP 011 304

AUTHOR Sturges, Allan W.; And Others
TITLE High School Graduates of the Stormy 1960's: What Happened to Them?
PUB DATE Mar 77
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Houston, Texas, March 19-23, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Activism; Administrative Policy; Civil Rights; Cultural Environment; Curriculum Problems; Dress Codes; *Followup Studies; *Negative Attitudes; Participant Characteristics; Political Issues; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Students; *Student Participation; War
IDENTIFIERS Student Unrest

ABSTRACT

A followup study of high school students graduating in 1970 from Cleveland, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and Edmonton (Alberta) area schools, investigated protest activity involvement during high school and present political/social activities and concerns. Educational targets of student unrest at the time are indicated as being (1) curriculum relevance, (2) instructional methods, (3) student civil rights, (4) personal treatment, (5) societal civil rights, and (6) teacher indifference to social ills. Attitudes of various categories of students toward the educational process are discussed: the majority (who viewed school in a lackluster way), those who viewed it as a center for social activities, those who were intellectually motivated and college directed, and those who saw the school system as an extension of political and social control. Common attitudes from all these groups were (1) school was a place to act and conform, (2) out-of-school activities were more relevant to social and political maturation, (3) curriculum was generally irrelevant and uninteresting, (4) the amount of student choice-making was minimal and generally related to the social status of the student, and (5) teachers were generally insensitive to the needs and feelings of students. Based on trends in the ensuing years of survey participants' lives, it is summarized that student activists of that time: (1) tend to be presently more politically active; (2) agree more with educators than the general public on the importance of emphasizing basic skills, career development. moral education, and teacher inservice; and (3) value independence and personal motivation more than nonactivists. (MJB)

Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original.

ED142532

High School Graduates of the Stormy 1960s: What Happened to Them?

A. Sturges, E. Bartoo, D. Friesen, R. Weaver, F. Wood

During the 1950's, high school students were noted for their apathy. Ten years later, teachers and administrators were trying to cope with student activism and demonstrations. Most of the demonstrations in secondary schools occurred between 1965 and 1970. In that time period, 56% of the junior high schools and 59% of the high schools experienced some form of student unrest. (Stoops, 1969) Adults, as well as students, were active in the protest movements of the 1960's.

Surveys by Harris, Gallop and Yankelovich (Lipset 1971 and Yankelovich 1972) conducted between 1964 and 1970 revealed that students became more negative in their attitudes toward the Viet Nam war and the schools' curriculum, expressed more support for the goals of blacks and the civil rights movement, increased their criticism of the free enterprise and justice systems, and became increasingly critical of the cultural values of this society. The President's Commission on Campus Unrest indicated the so-called New Youth Culture of the 60's (Scranton 1970) rejected materialism, technology and militarism, emphasized that "being true to oneself" was more important than doing what others expected, and aimed at liberating human conciousness and enhancing the immediate quality of life.

SP011 304

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

During this same time, dress codes and hair length regulations were common in schools, discipline was custodial and paternalistic, the curriculum reflected middle-class and college-bound values, and students were not expected to play a meaningful role in shaping the curriculum and/or instruction. This was also a time when enrollments were high, and experimentation with instructional innovations was commonplace.

The educational targets of student unrest included (Chesler 1969):

(1) The curriculum. Students complained that the curriculum was not relevant for the majority of the students that did not intend to attend college.

(2) The instruction. Students were resentful about the archaic and traditional forms of classroom instruction.

(3) Student civil rights. There were negative reactions to the schools' excessive control over the personal behavior of students. Students were particularly concerned over dress codes and hair length regulations, locker inspections, censorship of student newspapers, punishment without appeal, and the control of student government.

(4) Personal treatment. Students were concerned that teachers and administrators did not

treat students with courtesy and respect.

(5) Civil rights. Students felt they saw racism in teachers' behavior, and the curriculum did not include black studies nor was there recognition of black leaders such as Malcom X and Martin Luther King.

(6) Teacher indifference. Students felt a deep concern for the teachers' apparent disregard for the serious social ills in society; problems of the draft, poverty, pollution were not addressed in schools.

Educators were aware of the problems, and indicated the two major causes were the permissiveness of parents, courts and school authorities, as well as a curriculum that did not prepare youth for real-life situations. Causes were also attributed to the news media's methods of reporting unrest, students' fear of military service, and the schools' failure to deal with human relations problems in the classroom. (Manning, 1970)

There were inferences in the late 1960s that student unrest was common to most students. However, an April 1969 Gallop poll (Lipset, 1972, p. 74) reported that 94% of college male students did not wear beards, 70% had hair cuts that did not cover the ears, and 81% were generally neat in appearance. A similar report by Lipset (1972, p.72) indicated that only 10% of the student population was truly alienated and 3% could be considered as revolutionaries.

During 1976-77, students who graduated in 1970 from the areas of Cleveland, St. Louis, Los Angeles and Edmonton (Alberta) were surveyed. These graduates who had been in secondary school during thehottest period of student unrest were asked to respond to questions regarding their protest activities during high school, and their present political/social activities and concerns. The following sections provide a brief summary of the results of the studies conducted in each of these geographic areas. The final section concludes with a summary of the entire study.

Survey Sample

In the Cleveland area, a 25% (210 subjects) sample of the June 1970 graduating class of a suburban school was asked to respond to a questionnaire. In Los Angeles, 149 1970 graduates returned questionnaires. In Edmonton, 149 1970 graduates responded; 120 students from a St. Louis suburb responded. Thus, 628 students responded who had graduated in 1970 from high school to a questionnaire for about a 20% sample of the total graduating classes in Cleveland, Edmonton, Los Angeles and St.Louis areas.

Findings

With few exceptions, former students indicated they had participated in the traditional extracurricular activities of the school. In a few instances, they described involvement in boycotts mostly related to dress codes, food served in the cafeteria, to support teacher walkouts, or to support protests regarding the bombing of Cambodia.

The majority of the students viewed high school in a lackluster way. For the most part, students were "the embodiment of tradition, philistinism, and middle-class preoccupation with property, dating, and boosterism". (Wilson 1969) One former female student noted, "I don't remember much about high school. It was there. I had some friends I enjoyed being around, but nothing much ever excited me". Politically, this group provided no leadership. As a former student stressed, "Protest was vogue. The media played it up. It was the 'in' thing. I don't think most students really were committed to much of anything. Students in the colleges were running around raising hell. . . So what else was there to do . . ."

This majority group of students uniformly criticized "favoritism" that was afforded selected students. The favored social group was considered students that participated in the student council, cheerleaders, outstanding athletes, wealthy youth, and the honor society initiates. Those students not members of these groups believed the "in" students were not expected to follow the same regulations as those students who were not members of the special groups. As adults, these students still consider themselves as largely excluded from influential groups. They limit their involvement to social and civic groups; they have succumbed to the belief that society is controlled by a group of elites who allow and ask little input from people like themselves.

A small group of students viewed school as a center for social activities; they can be described as "cruisers" or "surfers". One student commented, "We went to school to make love, not grades. When the surf was up, we cut out. No one really seemed to care. We were too busy to get into the protest movement. Life was now . . . and it was to be enjoyed".

Another small group of students could be referred to as the "apostles of academe". These students were intellectually motivated, and whose concern was entrance to a prestigious university. Medved and Wallechinsky (Medved 1976) described these students with the statement, "With the experts of the world waiting expectantly for glorious achievements, how could (they) possibly dissappoint them? And (they) struggled forward, constantly shifting . . . choices, plagued by chronic indecision, searching in vain for a fate that might be worthy . . ."

As adults, some of these persons have continued to isolate themselves in activities and interests similar to those experienced in high school. However, others have expanded their interests to include political activities and concern for issues such as off shore oil spills and malnourished children. These students remember high school as "alright", neither particularly intellectually stimulating for those with academic interests nor particularly relevant for those who preferred to cruise, to surf, to enjoy parties.

The most publicized but less numerous student group were those who protested. These students felt the life in school and the "real world" were tangibly and radically at odds. A poem by Shei, a fifteen year old girl, illustrates this incongruity between the two worlds (A Poem 1970):

> At school we discussed the products of Italy and Japan
> How well the olives grow on the slopes of the Mediterranean.
> Then our teacher talked about her trip
> To France,
> Showed us some of her snaps with the Eiffel Tower in the background
> And one of her
> Walking along the Cote D'Azure near Monte Carlo
> She passed around her souvenirs - -
> A set of beads, a tiny crucifix, a post card of the Pope
> Blessing some deer in a shaded park.
> Later, Mr. Mundon discussed the moon . . .
> We drew pictures of a rocket.
> At home I watched the news with Walter Cronkite
> And the gentle face of a boy
> Bathed in burning Mapalm . . .
> Oh Christ . . .
> Oh Jesus Christ . . .
> Amen.

For these protestors, the school was seen as an extension of political and social control. One student stated, "We were told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. We had little choice if we wished to remain in school. Some of us opted out of the fish bowl . . ." Their political activities were high, protesting food services in the cafeteria, teacher dismissals, curricular changes, war, integration, etc. They participated in community rallies, and their school absences were frequent. Today, these students tend to be more politically active by voting, supporting certain candidates, and supporting issues not unlike those supported during high school.

Responses from all groups of students voiced similar criticisms of the schools. First, they considered schools as a place to act and conform. They believed out of school activities were more influential than in school activities in their becoming more mature and responsible citizens. A second criticism focused on the curriculum. Students considered the curriculum irrelevant and uninteresting, with no real reflection on the societal trauma being experienced outside the school. Those additions to the curriculum, such as Black Studies, were viewed as fringe offerings and labeled as "non academic". A third criticism related to the rarity of choice making. Students felt the amount of choice making available to students was directly related to the social status of the student, with higher social status students able to leave classes to participate in activities, have greater access to courses, and received more laudatory comments from teachers and administrators. A fourth criticism concerned the insensitivity of teachers and administrators toward students. With few exceptions, students felt teachers did not know them beyond the classroom, and their in-class attitudes toward students were tainted by the effects of teacher lounge rumors.

Several reasons for participating in unrest activities were given by the respondents. A female student who is now a lawyer said, "The whole protest movement seemed to blow in like the weather and it changed as quickly as it came."

This "chemistry of the times" seems to explain the activities of a number of students who participated but did not lead protest movements. Other reasons included the "incongruities of life being taught". Comments received from respondents indicated that here seemed to be little relationship between the curriculum of the school and the curriculum being learned in the real world.

Generally, the respondents did not enjoy being a high school student. They enjoyed the friends in high school and activities. Some respondents indicated continuing unhappiness with school. As one student commented, "I am a bitter person, mostly because of the crap I went through in high school. Competition in (this) school system stinks and I really never wanted any part of it, nor do I now. I hated every minute of high school. I must have thought about suicide 1,000 times while I was in it." Another student mentioned that the best part of the day was working after school and on weekends, and commented on the boring classes he had to take. Both boredom and the irrelevancy of the curriculum and instruction were frequently mentioned criticisms by the respondents. In addition, the regimentation of the schools and lack of decision making opportunities for student were mentioned.

Only 7% of the respondents indicated they were active in student council affairs. The majority of the students did not participate in activities, or limited their participation to sports activities. About 20% of the respondents indicated

they were active in demonstrations and radical activities. The majority of the students demonstrated against school authority and rules; 12% said peer pressure forced them to participate. About half of the respondents indicated social activities were the most meaningful contribution of the school. Although about a third of the students felt they were liberal while in high school, about half of the respondents consider themselves now as liberal. The majority of the respondents are not currently active in community affairs. About 80% of the male respondents took additional training after high school graduation; the majority of the respondents are currently employed at about the teacher or nurse level position.

Conservative students felt student union affairs and school regulations were more important issues than radical students believed them to be. As one activist student stated, "Through experience I find that the educational system is a game. The rules are set up by the top administrators and one has to play the game in their way or be punished. The educational system needs changing to provide for more humanistic attitudes so that our future generations will not only be taught technical skills, but skills of wisdom, in order to put knowledge to use for the betterment of mankind." Differences in student status were also noted in this comment, "Students from higher income families appear to be more cruel, more rude and less sensitive than middle and lower class students. This was true when I was in school and seems to be still true."

At the present time, most respondents felt they were more radical now than when they were in high school. Radical students are more active in community affairs than non radical students. Radicals aspire more frequently than non radicals to be school teachers and other similar professionals.

Summary

Based on the findings of this study, it would seem that activists:

(1) tend to be presently more politically active;

(2) agree more with educators than the general public on the importance of emphasizing basic skills, career development, moral education and teacher in-service; and

(3) value independence and personal motivation more than non-activists.

Schools have changed; the changes reflect concerns of the students of the 1960s. More parental involvement is being encouraged, and in most schools, dress codes and hair styles are no longer an issue. Once ignored, students' rights have been guaranteed by the courts. Due process for search procedures, suspensions and discipline actions are required; there is a guaranteed right to an education for all children.

There have been a number of curricular changes also. In 1975, DeArmon reported that over half of the schools in his study had adopted action or community learning programs, and half had adopted career education programs. Instructional programs in independent study and individualized instruction

had been adopted by over half the schools. And over 75% of these curricular, organizational or instructional changes had been implemented since 1970.

It would seem that student unrest of the late 1960s involved a minority of students that actually were reflecting social and cultural changes in the United States and Canada, and that their concerns are reflected in current curricular and instructional changes being experienced in schools. Current criticisms of the public schools, however, can be related to some concerns expressed by students in the 1960s. Irrelevancey of the content, inability to acquire the basic skills necessary for post secondary success, and inequality of public education because of social or cultural differences of students still seem to be concerns in public education. It is possible that there is a group of students that still are very unhappy with the schools, and express their frustrations through excessive absences and vandalism/discipline problems. Perhaps in the 1960s, students could demonstrate to help illustrate their frustrations; today's students exhibit their frustrations through another method.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Stoops, John A., A Philosopher of Eduatiçn Speaks, Common Sense and Student Unrest, pp. 45-54. Student Activism in the Secondary Schools, A Practical Outlook. Edited by L. W. Ashby and J.A. Stoops. Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc. Danville, Ill. (1969)

Lipset, S. M. Rebellion in the University, 306 pp. Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, MA (1972)

Yankelovich, D., Inc. The Changing Values on Campus, Political and Personal Attitudes of Today's College Students. 246 pp. Washington Square Press, New York, NY (1972)

Scranton, William W., Chairman, The President's Commission on Campus Unrest. Campus Unrest. (74-608779). 537 pp. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1970)

Chesler, M.A. Student and Administration Crises. Educational Leadership, 34-38 (October 1969).

Manning, W.O. An Investigation of Student Unrest in Selected Public High Schools. 121 pp. University of South Dakota Libraries, Vermillion,SD (1970).

DeArman, J. W. Investigation of the Abandonment Rate and Causes of Abandonment of Innovative Practices in Secondary Schools, 308 pp. Grant Number NIE-G-74-0005, National Institute of Education, University of MissouriColumbia, MO (June 1975)